

retail Clinic



Looking to boost your profits this month?
Read on for our experts' views on some of
your most common business woes

Q As an independent, I'm thinking about joining a trade association. I sell craft materials as well as finished craft and gifts. What would be the benefits of The Giftware Association?
Isabel says: Joining an association is all about benefiting from the negotiations already made. Because an association is a large group of businesses, which offers more negotiation power than that of an independent business. Those with retail premises joining the GA would immediately be able to benefit from

special streamline credit card processing rates that we have negotiated. These are far superior to those that would be offered if they went to their own banks.
We also provide a raft of invaluable business and legal services, ranging from a special insurance scheme for retailers to a property service that advises them on commercial/legal contracts when it comes to renting or buying premises. The GA can also carry out a check that enables retailers to find out if they are paying the correct rent/rates for the area in which they have their shop.

On a day-to-day basis, we continue our quest to save members money, while a regular flow of GA information ensures they are able to seek out the best deals.
In short, The GA is a proactive organisation that always has the interests of its members at heart – a shoulder to lean on when the going gets tough, with caring staff at the end of the phone to answer enquiries and talk through problems. Those retailers that join The GA become part of a caring community that occupies the gift and home industry's inside track.

Q I'm thinking about mailing my first catalogue. What advice do you have?
Ian says: Make sure it is working as hard as it can to drive sales both on and off line! Catalogues are a proven, valuable part of an integrated marketing strategy and great at driving online sales. Years ago the phrase '360° marketing' was coined, this was revised to 'clicks and mortar' and then recently to 'flick and click'. But however you describe it, essentially it means one thing; getting your name and products in front of prospective customers and allowing them to respond through their preferred channel.
Mailing catalogues regularly lifts conversion to online sales, encourages more frequent purchases and increases average order value. Whilst many predicted the gradual demise of catalogues in the wake of online sales, nothing could be further from the truth. Catalogues are more important and relevant than

ever and this was highlighted in a recent report commissioned by the Royal Mail.
Although the web and catalogues are diametrically opposed in their approach, this difference is crucial to their successful integration. Good catalogues are proactive and demand to be read, websites are passive and generally have to be 'discovered' or 'directed to'. Catalogues have the power to reach prospects, and generate sales, like no other marketing piece. And this applies both to B2B and B2C.
Catalogues can be a significant investment and need to work hard from the moment they are picked up by the reader. You can't afford to get it wrong. Over the past thirty-odd years catalogues have been subject to a huge amount of research and we know that good design, exploiting proven catalogue dynamics, can greatly influence buying decisions.



In simple terms, a catalogue has to grab attention, relay your proposition, sell your products off the page and remove barriers to placing the order – simple really! But get any part of it wrong and the catalogue will fail to maximise its selling potential. Strong covers, use of hotspots, sales-led copy, generating pace, clear navigation, easy ordering are key areas of any successful catalogue. And remember, catalogues are a specialist marketing tool - specialist skills are required to ensure it is working as hard as it possibly can.



Q I'm new to ecommerce, and a friend told me that a 'cloud-based solution' is best, but why is this best?
Nick says: The term 'cloud-based solution' refers to a software application or service that is delivered over the internet. When you've shopped on Amazon, searched on Google, communicated on Facebook or logged into a Hotmail account, you have used a cloud service.
Ease of use and setup – you can be up and running much quicker as there is no software to install and no complicated technical setup to worry about. Benefits includes:
Lower cost – they are generally charged for on a monthly rental basis and because the provider's cost of maintenance and support is less the up-front cost is usually much lower than desktop applications. For example, my company Actinic provides a hosted ecommerce application for £19 per month.
Universal access -you have the flexibility to manage your site from any PC that has a web browser and internet access, anywhere in the world.
Security – you will automatically be protected by the latest systems and procedures as your provider is likely to have a far greater level of physical and electronic security than you would be able to provide for yourself.

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Supporting retailers nationwide

MEET THE experts

Nick Kington

Nick Kington is managing director of ecommerce suppliers Actinic Online.
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Ian Simpson

Ian Simpson is managing director at design, print and marketing company Catalogues 4 Business.
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Isabel Martinson

Isabel Martinson is chief executive of The Giftware Association (GA)



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Got a query for our panel of industry experts?
Email allison.jacobs@aceville.co.uk



A new range of festively themed stamps and papercraft
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